



# Senator Sheila Kuehl

23<sup>rd</sup> District  
Newsletter  
May 2005

## Gang Violence Reduction Action Plan Developed

Town Hall represents unprecedented commitment from the community to help youth and deal with gang violence.

### Hilda Garcia

*Field Representative*

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, our office, along with the City of Santa Monica, held a community forum and a series of workshops on gang violence that drew a crowd of more than 300 residents, civic leaders, teachers, students, parents, police, and social service providers.

This event was a significant step toward a focused community effort aimed at reducing gang activity in Santa Monica, with a particular focus on the Pico neighborhood. The workshop allowed stakeholders—youth, parents, clergy, neighbors, educators, youth workers, and organizations—to come together to seek common ground, discuss action steps and solutions, and hear experts from the trenches reflect on proposed strategies.

The program started with a short film about the Pico neighborhood, after which attendees broke into small groups and reported back to panelists who included gang expert Blinky Rodriguez, educator Bill Martinez, behavioral scientist John McDonald, youth violence prevention expert Leah Aldridge, and former State Senator Tom Hayden, author of *Street Wars and the Future of Violence*.

A second meeting, geared toward action steps, was originally scheduled to be held on March 12<sup>th</sup>; however, a tragedy occurred in the Pico neighborhood

before the second meeting. Two young men were killed by gang members. Jonathan Hernandez and Hector Bonilla both had very promising lives. Hector was a husband and a father of three beautiful sons. Jonathan had just graduated from high school with a 4.0 GPA and was on his way to college. Both young men had a bright future but also had a past that they had risen above in the last few years of their lives. Because of this tragedy, our office and the city postponed the workshop until April 9<sup>th</sup>.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, more than 250 community members came together to begin to develop an action plan for the entire community to reduce gang violence in the Pico neighborhood. The goal of the action plan meeting was to come up with realistic ways to reduce gang violence within 2 years.

Participants broke out into 3 small groups titled “Make It Work,” “Keep It Safe,” and “Bring It Home.” Each group identified two or three action strategies that could be implemented within two years. The three groups returned to the larger group to report on their recommendations, and the action partners, including the schools, the college, the police, business, and labor, committed to implementing at least one of the strategies listed from each group.

The action partners were chosen for their ability to provide needed resources such as training, jobs, education, and programs that target at-risk youth.

*Action Plan continued on page 2.*

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# A Memorable Day in the Park

## *SOKA Property Becomes Public Parkland*

### **Laura Plotkin**

*District Director*

It was a bright sunny day on Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains where a group of park supporters gathered in Malibu/Las Virgenes Canyon at SOKA University (formerly the King Gillette Ranch) to celebrate something they thought they would never see—the announcement of the close of escrow on 588 acres of the most sought after parkland in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Many of those who participated in the purchase of the property as public parkland were on hand to celebrate its beauty and thank the public for encouraging them to come together to find a way to save it.

This successful partnership included the following speakers at the event: Assemblymember Fran Pavley, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Executive Director Joe Edmiston and Chair Elizabeth Cheadle; State Parks Superintendent, Ruth Coleman; Soka University's Dr. Daniel Y. Habuki; the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's Mike Berger; the cities of Calabasas, represented by Councilmember James Bozajian and Agoura Hills, represented by Mayor Ed Corridori; the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, represented by David Nahai; Woody Smeck of the National Park Service; Steve Harris of the Mountains Restoration Trust; and Laura Plotkin representing State Senator



Photo courtesy of County of Los Angeles.

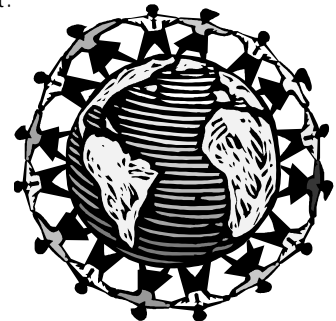
Sheila Kuehl. Many members of the audience, who had worked on the acquisition over the past 35 years, as activists and/or staffers with governmental agencies or nonprofit groups like the Sierra Club, Save Open Space and others, were also present to enjoy the soft breeze, the sound of birds and the vision of two swans gliding across the pond and past the majestic oak, under which the ceremony took place.

In the coming months, there will be opportunity for public input, through the public hearing process, on how the park will best serve the people of California. With the capture of this crown jewel of the Santa Monica Mountains as public parkland, we are assured that this magnificent property will be here for our children and grandchildren and generations to come. Congratulations to all!

*Action Plan continued from page 1.*

The action partners are people who many of us know and who are integral parts of the community:

- ♦ John Deasey, Superintendent of Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.
- ♦ Larry Miranda, California Youth Authority
- ♦ Gil Bautista, LA County Probation Department
- ♦ Nat Trives, Chair, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
- ♦ Kathy Dodson, President of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
- ♦ Tom Donner, President of Santa Monica College
- ♦ Nick Summerfield, California Employment Development Department
- ♦ Susan McCarthy, City Manager, City of Santa Monica
- ♦ Jim Butts, Chief, Santa Monica Police Department
- ♦ Maria Loya & Wes Thompson, Pico Neighborhood Association
- ♦ Zina Josephs and Tom Cleys, Sunset Park Neighborhood Association
- ♦ Reverend Janet Bregar, Father Mike Gutierrez, and Reverend Sandie Richards from the Faith Community



Each action partner agreed to take part in implementing the action strategies presented by the group and also agreed to report back to our office by September 1, 2005, on progress made on each of their commitments. Overall, these gatherings represented an unprecedented commitment by the community to finding achievable methods to help youth and deal with gang violence.

# Talking Turkey about Toads and Trout

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**Dennis O'Connor, Consultant**  
*Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water*

Earlier this year, over 100 cards and letters poured into our office, expressing concerns about a Department of Water Resources plan to cut back summer water flows in Piru Creek. The reduced summer flows were a key part of an expensive strategy to protect the endangered Arroyo Toad. But, the concerns weren't about the toads. It seems that the proposed changes in water flows would seriously harm one of the last wild trout fisheries in Southern California.

In response, Senator Kuehl invited representatives of DWR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of Fish & Game, recreational fishing interests, and environmental organizations to a fact finding meeting. In her invitation, Senator Kuehl wrote, "I want us to find a way to protect the endangered arroyo toad while maintaining the naturally reproducing trout population. To that end, I have asked Dennis O'Connor, who oversees water issues on the Natural Resources and Water Committee that I chair in Sacramento, to convene this very important meeting."

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, the day of the meeting, over 70 people packed the Agoura Hills City Council Chambers to see if toads and trout can live in harmony. Within the first half hour, Field Supervisor Diane K. Noda with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service said that it was worth investigating such options. Dwayne Maxwell from the California Department of Fish and Game similarly supported taking the time to craft options to protect both the toads and the trout. With those statements, the representatives of DWR agreed to work to develop other options.

The balance of the meeting became sort of an open forum where those in favor of the toads or trout or both, had opportunities to explain why protection of that species was so important.

As a consequence of that meeting, DWR, FWS, and DFG will be getting together the first week in May to start working towards alternatives to protect both the endangered arroyo toad and the wild trout.

*Piru Creek is a 50-mile waterway between Pyramid Lake and Lake Piru north of Castaic.*

## Kuehl Appointed to Ocean Protection Council

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**Julia McIver, Consultant**  
*Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water*

Senator Kuehl has been appointed as the Senate *ex officio* member of the California Ocean Protection Council, newly created by last year's SB 1319 (Burton). The Council was created in response to the Pew Oceans Commissions Report and the US Commission on Oceans Policy report on the state of our oceans. Both reports described ways in which our oceans are in trouble, including degraded water quality, "dead zones" and loss of species stemming from coastal and ocean development and other human activities.

The reports identified a need for a national council as well as individual state councils to coordinate activities regarding ocean policy and governance in the United States. California has long been a leader in protecting coast and ocean resources, and is at the forefront in responding to the troubling conclusions in these reports. The Ocean Protection Council will be taking on several tasks: completing a study on ocean

economics, improving the effectiveness of our conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems, and recommending changes in law and policy needed to better protect California's seaboard.



As the Senate representative to the Council, Senator Kuehl will extend her long history of championing California's coast and ocean. The first action taken by the Council was sending a letter to our Congressional delegation stating the Council's strong opposition to proposed changes in federal law that are even now appearing in the news. The Council vigorously opposes any policy changes that would diminish the state's ability to control the siting of liquefied natural gas facilities, defend our coast from offshore oil drilling, or reduce the state's control over coastal development.

The next meeting of the Ocean Protection Council is proposed for June 10. For more information about the Council, contact the Resources Agency at (916) 653-5656 or visit <http://resources.ca.gov/ocean/copc/>

# California's Budget: De-Mystified

**Anne Neville**  
Legislative Aide

California's budget is always in the news, yet few people feel they really understand how it works. We thought we'd use some space in this newsletter to explain the budget process. The Constitution requires the Governor to submit a budget to the Legislature by January 10<sup>th</sup> of each year. If proposed expenditures in the budget exceed expected revenues, the Governor must recommend sources for additional funding. The Governor's budget contains information about spending and cuts for every part of California's government; this includes schools, transportation, health, and many other areas.

Once the Governor's budget has been released, the Constitution also requires that a bill, delineating all the recommended expenditures, be introduced in both the state Senate and Assembly. Traditionally, the Chairs of the Senate and budget Assembly budget committees each introduce a bill. Since the Governor is not allowed to author a bill in the legislature, the Chairs of the budget committees, regardless of party, do this as a courtesy.

Because the budget is so large, each budget committee divides the budget into pieces to be considered by budget subcommittees according to issue areas. The Senate, for example, has five budget subcommittees. Senator Kuehl is the Chair of Subcommittee #2, which oversees resources, environmental protection, and energy. The job of each subcommittee is to review each of the Governor's proposed spending additions or cuts and decide whether to support or oppose each recommendation, in that issue area, department, agency, or division.

In April, the Subcommittees receive "Finance Letters" (often called "April Letters") from the Department of Finance. These are requests to make changes to the budgets of various departments. Then, by May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Finance must provide more proposed amendments based on changes in expected state revenues. Typically, the Legislature waits until the May Revise, as it is called, to make specific funding decisions on major areas like education, corrections, and health and human services.

When the subcommittees have finished their analyses, they report their recommendations to the full budget committee in each house. The full budget committee then adopts a budget, one in the Assembly and one

## Fast Facts about California's Budget

- ◆ The Governor's proposed budget for 2005-2006 is \$111.7 billion.
- ◆ The state budget is over 1000 pages long.
- ◆ California's Constitution requires that the budget be passed by June 15, 2005.
- ◆ California's fiscal year begins July 1 of each year.

To learn more about the state budget, visit the following websites:

*California Department of Finance*  
[www.dof.ca.gov](http://www.dof.ca.gov)

*Legislative Analyst's Office*  
[www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov)

*California Budget Project*  
[www.cbp.org](http://www.cbp.org)



in the Senate, and sends it to the Senate or Assembly floor for a vote. A two-thirds vote is required for the budget to pass out of each house.

Generally, the Senate and Assembly end up with budgets that have differences in a number of specific line items, based on the work of the subcommittees in each house. To resolve differences between the houses, a conference committee is created, consisting of members of both houses. If, after the conference committee meets, there are still issues of disagreement, a meeting of the "Big 5" occurs. The "Big 5" consists of the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Assembly and the Minority Leader of the Senate. Together, this group works out a compromise. The version of the budget agreed upon by the conference committee – or the Big 5 – is then sent to each house for a vote. Once a two-thirds vote is reached, the budget is sent to the Governor's desk. The Governor can sign or veto the bill. The Governor can also do what is referred to as "blue pencil" any item, meaning he can reduce or eliminate the spending for individual items, but may not violate existing statutory or constitutional law. Once the Governor signs the bill, California has an official budget for that year.



# Senator Kuehl Unveils LGBT Caucus' Legislative Priorities

**Eric Astacaan**

*Consultant, LGBT Caucus*

Senator Sheila James Kuehl, Chair of the California Legislative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus is pleased to announce the Caucus' legislative priorities for the 2005 Session.

"These measures build upon the success we have achieved in the last few years," said Senator Kuehl (D - Santa Monica). "They will strengthen our efforts to promote full equality for all Californians."

The six-member Caucus endorsed the following bills as their priority legislation for 2005:

- SB 181 (Migden) - Lift "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy in the State Militia
- SB 300 (Kuehl) - Extension of Unpaid Family Leave to Domestic Partners
- SB 973 (Kuehl) - Public Employees' Retirement Equity for Domestic Partners
- SJR 11 (Kehoe) - Urge Congress to Repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy in the U.S. Military
- AB 19 (Leno) - Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act
- AB 866 (Yee) - Code of Fair Campaign Practices
- AB 1400 (Laird) - Civil Rights Act of 2005

- AB 1586 (Koretz)- Insurance Gender Equity Act

"We are proud of this year's priorities for the Caucus and continue to support equality and fairness in other legislation, as well. We hope our allies and all fair-minded Californians will stand firm against discrimination and support these important measures," concluded Senator Kuehl.



These bills are being heard in policy committees in April and May. They have to pass their respective house of origin by June 3.

The Legislative LGBT Caucus, the only official state legislative caucus in the country comprised of openly-LGBT state legislators, was formed in June 2002. The caucus' role is to present a forum

for the California Legislature to discuss issues that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Californians and to further the goal of equality and justice for all Californians. In addition to Senator Kuehl, other members of the Caucus include Senators Christine Kehoe and Carole Migden, and Assemblymembers Jackie Goldberg, John Laird, and Mark Leno.

*Pictured above (L to R): Senator Christine Kehoe, Senator Carole Migden, Assemblymember John Laird, Senator Sheila Kuehl, Assemblymember Mark Leno, and Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg.*

## Senator Sheila J. Kuehl ♦ 23<sup>rd</sup> District, California State Senate

I am always happy to hear from my constituents about any State-related matters, such as experiences with State agencies, ideas for new legislation, and information about issues, etc. You are welcome to phone, write or send me an email. E-mails will be acknowledged, but, since we get hundreds, sometimes thousands, a day, if you are a constituent and you'd like a personal answer, please phone or write. I love serving you in the legislature and look forward to all the good work we can do together.

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Visit my website at [www.senate.ca.gov/kuehl](http://www.senate.ca.gov/kuehl)

# SB 840 Passes Key Policy Committees

*California Health Insurance Reliability Act (CHIRA) Receives Broad Support*

## Sara Rogers

Consultant, Capitol Office

As you read in last month's newsletter, SB 840 (Kuehl) provides fiscally sound, affordable health insurance coverage to all Californians, provides every Californian the right to choose his or her own physician and controls health cost inflation.

Support for this measure is growing rapidly. SB 840 is now strongly endorsed by nearly 150 organizations representing a spectrum of Californians, including churches, senior groups, consumer advocates, teachers and doctors. More than 2500 individual letters and 400 letters have been received from individual physicians over the last few weeks, demonstrating that Californians really do care about comprehensive health insurance reform that achieves affordable, reliable health care for all.

Additionally, we've seen an important growth in support from the small business community indicating an increasing willingness to consider universal health care. An April article from the Los Angeles Business Journal highlighted a new study by Small Business California that finds that 52% of small businesses surveyed said they "either strongly or somewhat favored a so-called single payer system".

Legislatively, SB 840 has come a long way. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005, SB 840 passed the Senate Banking, Finance and Insurance Committee on a 7-4 vote. A majority of committee members made statements of strong support, and supporters filled the halls of the capital. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005, SB 840 passed the Senate Health Committee on a 7 to 4 vote, moving the bill to the Senate Appropriations committee where it will be taken up sometime in May. From there, SB 840 will head to the Senate Floor.

In the meantime, there is still work to do. In April, advocates met in a series of meetings – one in Northern California and another in Southern California – to develop and implement a statewide grassroots organizing plan. In connection with these meetings, advocates have developed useful organizing tools to help direct and harmonize grassroots efforts around the state.

SB 840 works by establishing a streamlined finance system for health care in California, allowing the state to

consolidate the administrative functions of thousands of different insurance companies and plans into one comprehensive insurance plan, saving businesses, consumers, as well as the state, billions of dollars in the first year. Additionally, SB 840 directs the state to use its enormous purchasing power to achieve the same deep discounts for prescription drugs that all other industrialized nations receive.

SB 840 (CHIRA) offers a strong vision for a modernized health care system that will provide high quality, affordable and reliable health care for all residents. I urge you to support the California Health Insurance Reliability Act of 2005. For more information, contact Sara Rogers at (916) 445-1353 or Judy Spelman at (916) 322-1680.

## Senator Kuehl's Committee Assignments

Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata has appointed Senator Kuehl to the following committees for the 2005-06 Legislative Session:

### Standing Committees:

- ◆ Natural Resources and Water (Chair)
- ◆ Budget and Fiscal Review
- ◆ Environmental Quality
- ◆ Government Modernization, Efficiency and Accountability
- ◆ Health
- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Labor and Industrial Relations
- ◆ Local Government

### Subcommittees:

- ◆ Budget - Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources and Environment (Chair)
- ◆ Health - Aging & Long Term Care
- ◆ Health - Stem Cell Research Oversight
- ◆ Natural Resources & Water – Delta Resources

### Select Committees:

- ◆ School Safety (Chair)
- ◆ Health Insurance Crisis in California (Chair)
- ◆ California Correctional System
- ◆ Developmental Disabilities & Mental Health
- ◆ Perchlorate Contamination

# Human Trafficking in Los Angeles

*Slavery and Forced Labor a Growing Problem in our Community*

**Tam Ma**

Consultant, Capitol Office

Every ten minutes, a man, woman, or child is recruited, kidnapped, or smuggled into the United States to work as a modern-day slave. A victim of human trafficking is anyone who is being manipulated or forced to work against his or her will or provide services for the benefit of someone else.

Human trafficking is a \$9 billion global industry where the perpetrators are both individuals and organized crime networks. Alongside drugs and arms, trafficking in human beings is one of the largest and fastest growing sources of illicit profit worldwide. The U.S. government estimates that, globally, up to 800,000 people each year are traded against their will to work in servitude. Nearly 18,000 women and children are trafficked each year into the United States, primarily from Latin America, countries of the former Soviet Union and Southeast Asia. This figure is likely to be conservative since many cases are never discovered by law enforcement.

A recent UC Berkeley report entitled, *Freedom Denied: Forced Labor in California*, identified 57 forced labor operations in almost a dozen cities in California between 1998 and 2003, involving more than 500 individuals from 18 countries. Over eighty percent of the cases have been documented in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose.

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***Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and is becoming one of the most important human rights issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*** – Senator Sheila Kuehl

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The Los Angeles area is without a doubt a hotbed for human trafficking activity. Ten years ago, we were shocked by the discovery in El Monte of 72 Thai garment workers being held in what amounted to indentured servitude -- working 17 hours a day, forced to live in inhumane conditions, and earning as little as 70 cents an hour. The Manasurangkun case received widespread media attention for the sweatshop conditions in which the garment workers worked. The fact that these individuals had been trafficked, however, was not widely recognized at the time. Community leaders in Los Angeles have begun paying more attention to this problem in recent years.

The City of Los Angeles, under the leadership of City Councilman Tony Cardenas and the Commission on the Status of Women, convened a citywide Human Trafficking and Child Prostitution Task Force, which released a report last month highlighting a lack of awareness in the community and among some law enforcement as to what human trafficking is and how victims could be identified. The report found that Los Angeles saw about 15 cases of human trafficking between 2003 and 2004. The underreporting and misidentification of trafficking victims is a factor in the lack of understanding how pervasive the problem is in Los Angeles.

The City's work on this issue has led to a coalition of federal, state and non-governmental agencies to form the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on

*Human Trafficking continued on page 8.*

## Recent Human Trafficking Cases in Los Angeles

❖ In August 2004, Nena Ruiz, a former school-teacher from the Philippines, won a lawsuit claiming that James Jackson, a vice president of legal affairs at Sony Pictures Entertainment and his wife Elizabeth kept her as a domestic slave in their Culver City home, paying her only \$300 for a year's labor. Ms. Ruiz worked 18 hours a day and was repeatedly beaten by both her captors, who stole her passport and threatened her if she tried to leave. The jury awarded Ms. Ruiz \$825,000 in damages for involuntary servitude, false imprisonment, assault and other claims.

❖ Last year, local law enforcement raided a brothel in south Los Angeles where more than 12 trafficked women and girls were being housed as indentured prostitutes. Four accomplices recruited victims as young as 14- and 15-years-old from their villages in Mexico. Once the women and girls were trafficked across the border by smugglers, the traffickers transported them to Los Angeles where they were forced to work as prostitutes in brothels, massage parlors, and personal residences. In July 2004, Jenny Valle-Maldonado pleaded guilty and was indicted on 28 different counts relating to the case, including recruiting, importing, and harboring undocumented immigrants. She was also ordered to pay \$135,000 in restitution to nine victims.

Human Trafficking, whose mission is to improve tactics for identifying and rescuing trafficking victims, provide assistance to victims and prosecute those responsible for human trafficking. In addition, the Los Angeles Police Department received a \$450,000 grant from the U.S. Justice Department to pay for the development and implementation of a program that will provide every LAPD officer with training on how to identify trafficking victims to ensure they are quickly referred to community-based organizations that provide needed services.

Senator Kuehl is working to create a more cohesive anti-trafficking strategy at the state level. Her bill, Senate Bill 180, creates the California ACTS Task Force to bring together state agencies, law enforcement, and social service providers to develop strategies to prosecute traffickers and protect victims of trafficking. The bill also creates training programs for health care providers and peace officers so they can better identify trafficking victims and get them the help they need. SB 180 passed the Senate Public Safety Committee by a vote of 6-0 on April 19. The measure now moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a vote in early May.

"Every year, tens of thousands of men, women, and children are brought against their will to the U.S. to work in sweatshops, farms, personal residences, and the commercial sex trade. California, by virtue of its large manufacturing and service sector industries, global economic strength, and large immigrant population, is a major destination for human trafficking. Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and is becoming one of the most important human rights issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's time for California to take serious action," said Senator Kuehl.

### How to Help a Victim of Human Trafficking

If you or someone you know is or has been in a human trafficking situation, please call:

**1-888-428-7581**

U.S. Department of Justice, Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Complaint Line

**1-888-373-7888**

Covenant House Anti-Trafficking Hotline

If a victim's situation is life-threatening, call 911 and report their location to police.

## Hello, How May We Assist You?

**Oscar Garcia and Steve Lane**  
District Office

When the phone rings in the District Office (DO), it will most likely be answered by Oscar Garcia or Steve Lane. Known as the DO's "front line", we field calls from constituents with a plethora of questions, opinions, and issues. Due to our pleasant demeanor, our supportive voices, and our dogged attempts to articulate answers, we hope constituents feel that they have been guided by true experts.

In reality, it is our task to make sure constituents' concerns are addressed. We have legislative contacts in state agencies such as the DMV, Employment Development Department, Department of Social Services, the Franchise Tax Board, the state Medi-Cal program, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the Attorney General's office (we could keep going). The DO staff can help constituents to research and answer questions, resolve issues, or expedite procedures. Many callers are frustrated

when they have to deal with the state public information system and are relieved to talk to a "live" person and are pleased that we are able to make contacts for them. We work with the staff of local and state government officials as well as interface with federal representatives' staff to do our best to resolve multiple issues that might involve both levels of representation.



### Oscar Garcia

I started my journey into politics way back in 1997 when I worked on Senator Richard Alarcon's campaign for the 20<sup>th</sup> Senate district and have been involved many campaigns and voter registration projects for the past 8 years. I was fortunate enough to be given this great opportunity to join Senator Kuehl's office in November of 2004.

Although I'm still very green, I find myself amazed at how we are able to help so many people in our district and it's not only just solving their problems be-

Front Line continued on Page 9.



cause sometimes that just can't be done, but helping them understand the reasons why they were denied access to a program, form, appeal, appointment, letter or just couldn't get a live person on one of the many state phone numbers. And sometimes a person just needs to be heard and that is one thing I am very proud of, that we are able to extend that personal touch to our constituents.

#### Steve Lane

I began working for then-Assemblymember Kuehl in Encino as a volunteer in early 1999, and followed the office to West Los Angeles when Sheila became Senator Kuehl. I was invited to be a staffer in June 2002 and time has flown by ever since.

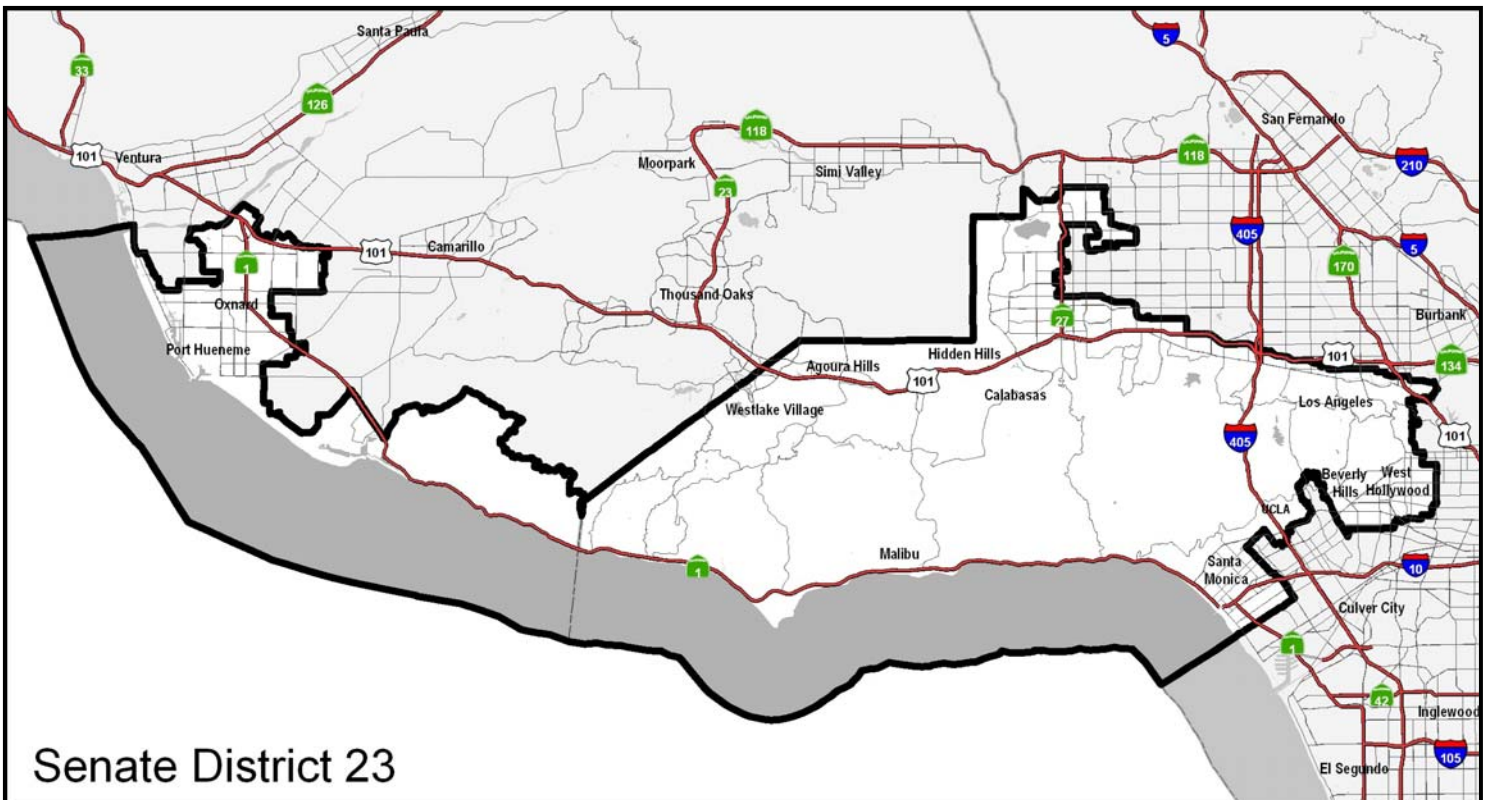
Early in my "professional" presence in the District Office, I was invited to tour the Biscailuz Recovery Cen-

ter, a small experimental jail created by Sheriff Lee Baca. Its emphasis on counseling and therapy intrigued me in that I have a B.S. in Psychology. Their success rate was impressive, but like many innovative (and expensive) agencies, they succumbed to budget woes.

Senator Kuehl has always supported inmate's rights and I was asked by another staff member to take over response letters to inmates. I have since, with the assistance of two excellent interns Brooke Montgomery and Carol Nidorf, responded to nearly three hundred letters. Through these communications, I may not move mountains, but try to convey a sense of hope to inmates and their families.

Give us a call at (310) 441-9084 and we'll do our best to help you to resolve any problems you have with state government.

**23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District:** The 23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District includes the cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Oxnard, Santa Monica, West Hollywood and Westlake Village and the communities of Bel Air, Brentwood, Canoga Park, Encino, Hollywood, Mt. Olympus, Port Hueneme, Pacific Palisades, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Tarzana, Topanga, West Los Angeles, West Hills, Westwood and Woodland Hills.



For a more detailed map and demographic information about Senate District 23, visit:  
<http://www.sen.ca.gov/ftp/SEN/senplan/SD23.HTM>

Information about California's legislative districts can be accessed at:  
[http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators\\_and\\_districts/districts/districts.html](http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators_and_districts/districts/districts.html)